

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DOHA 00708 170644Z

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ACTION NEA-07

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 EUR-08 L-01 INR-05 PM-03 PRS-01

SP-02 NSC-05 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 OMB-01 SAB-01

SAM-01 EB-03 /053 W

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R 180905Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY DOHA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0567

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L DOHA 0708

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINT QA

SUBJ: AMIR OF QATAR'S INTERVIEW WITH KUWAITI PAPER DISTURBS GOQ

REF: A) DOHA 0688; B) DOHA 0694

1. SUMMARY: AMIR OF QATAR'S RECENT INTERVIEW WITH KUWAIT PAPER HAS CAUSED CONSIDERABLE CONSTERNATION IN GOQ SINCE INTERVIEW MAY HAVE NEGATIVE IMPACT ON AMIR'S IMAGE BOTH AT HOME AND ABROAD. AMIR'S APPARENTLY FRANK ANSWERS TO A NUMBER OF SENSITIVE QUESTIONS HAVE PUBLICLY REVEALED VIEWS WHICH CONFIRM GROWING LOCAL CRITICISM OF HIS POLICIES. END SUMMARY

2. WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT AMIR'S JUNE 9 INTERVIEW WITH KUWAIT PAPER "SIYASSA" HAS CAUSED CONSIDERABLE UPSET WITHIN GOQ. AMIR HIMSELF IN CONVERSATION WITH AMBASSADOR JUNE 12 ACCUSED KUWAITI JOURNALIST OF DISTORTING HIS VIEWS (REF B). CONSTERNATION
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PAGE 02 DOHA 00708 170644Z

HERE APPARENTLY CAUSED BY FACT THAT INTERVIEW HIGHLIGHTED VIEWS

OF AMIR ON NUMBER OF SUBJECTS WHICH VERY SENSITIVE, PARTICULARLY SINCE AMIR'S STATEMENTS COULD BE READ TO CONFIRM CRITICISMS WHICH INTERNAL CRITICS HAVE BEEN LEVELING AT REGIME.

3. EMBASSY OBTAINED COPY OF "SIYASSA" WITH FULL TEXT OF INTERVIEW, AND WE SEE SOME CAUSE FOR GOQ'S APPREHENSIONS. GOVT APPARENTLY MADE CLUMSY EFFORT TO SANITIZE INTERVIEW BY PUBLISHING EXCERPTS ONLY IN DAILY "AL ARAB" AND BY CARRYING SIMILAR EXPURGATED VERSION ON TV. THIS WAS INEFFECTIVE, HOWEVER, SINCE "SIYASSA" IS REGULARLY DISTRIBUTED HERE AND NO RPT NO ATTEMPT WAS MADE TO SUPPRESS DISTRIBUTION.

4. DURING JUNE 12 CONVERSATION WITH AMB, DR HASSAN KAMEL, AMIR'S MOST SENIOR ADVISER, PROVIDED BACKGROUND AND COMMENTARY ON INTERVIEW, WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS POTENTIALLY DAMAGING TO AMIR'S IMAGE BOTH AT HOME AND ABROAD. ACCORDING KAMEL, USUAL GOQ PRACTICE ON INTERVIEWS IS TO REQUIRE WRITTEN LIST OF QUESTIONS FOR WHICH WRITTEN ANSWERS ARE PROVIDED, AND THIS WAS DONE IN THIS CASE. HOWEVER, INTERVIEWER, "SIYASSA'S" AHMAD JARALLAH, FOR WHOSE JOURNALISTIC TALENTS KAMEL SAID HE HAD HIGH RESPECT, INSISTED THAT HE SUPPLEMENT WRITTEN REPLIES WITH PERSONAL CONVERSATION WITH AMIR. KAMEL SAID REQUEST WAS GRANTED AND JARALLAH PROCEEDED TO ASK A NUMBER OF SENSITIVE QUESTIONS TO WHICH AMIR, WHO WAS NOT RPT NOT ACCUSTOMED TO SUCH INTERVIEWING FORMAT, PROVIDED "SPONTANEOUS" ANSWERS, APPARENTLY MUCH TO HIS LATER DISTRESS, SINCE HE DID NOT RPT NOT REALIZE HOW THEY WOULD SOUND IN PRINT. KAMEL SAID THAT IN ALL FAIRNESS, JARALLAH REPEATEDLY WARNED AMIR THAT HE WAS GOING TO PRINT WHAT HE SAIDM FURTHER GOOF ON GOQ'S PART, KAMEL SAID, WAS FAILURE TO INSIST ON CLEARING TEXT OF INTERVIEW BEFORE IT WAS PUBLISHED, WHICH WAS USUAL GOQ REQUIREMENT. KAMEL WAS CRITICAL, HOWEVER, OF JARALLAH'S FULL EXPLOITATION OF SITUATION. HE SAID TONE OF INTERVIEW WAS MOCKING AND LEG-PULLING. JARALLAH HAD REFERRED TO KHALIFA AS "SHAYKH" RATHER THAN "AMIR" OF QATAR AND HAD UNDERLINED AMIR'S UNEDUCATED USE OF ARABIC.

5. KAMEL SAID THAT IN REPLYING TO QUESTIONS, AMIR HAD REVEALED HIS SKEPTICISM TOWARD UNITY MOVES IN GULF, AND ARAB SOLIDARITY IN LARGER AREA CONTEXT. AMIR UNDERLINED NECESSITY OF CAREFUL PREPARATIONS FOR SUCH MOVES AND CRITICIZED ARABS' DISPOSITION
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PAGE 03 DOHA 00708 170644Z

TO DO A LOT OF TALKING AND LITTLE ACTING. ACCORDING KAMEL, ALTHOUGH THIS MAY BE TRUE, IT NOT RPT NOT POLITIC TO POINT OUT SUCH SHORTCOMINGS AT THIS PARTICULAR TIME WHEN SOLIDARITY AND UNITY ARE WATCHWORDS IN REGION. KAMEL SAID THAT JARALLAH'S QUESTIONS ON QATAR'S ISOLATION FROM MAINSTREAM OF GULF EVENTS AND ABOUT QATAR'S BEING IN SAUDI "ORBIT" WERE PARTICULARLY STINGING. HE TERMED AMIR'S DENIALS NOT CREDIBLE SINCE IT ACCEPTED AS AXIOMATIC THAT GOQ OPERATES IN SAUDI SHADOW AND IT

OBVIOUS FACT THAT QATAR HAS LARGELY BEEN ODD MAN OUT IN RECENT SERIES OF CONSULTATIONS AMONG GULF RULERS. ON INTERNAL AFFAIRS, KAMEL SAID THAT AMIR'S BRUSH-OFF OF QUESTIONS ON BUDGET AND INVESTMENT POLICY SECRECY, AND HIS DECLARATION THAT DEMOCRACY MUST COME TO QATAR VERY GRADUALLY, WERE PARTICULARLY ABRASIVE LOCALLY SINCE THESE TWO MATTERS HAVE BEEN A PRINCIPAL CAUSE OF LOCAL DISCONTENT. IN ADDITION, KAMEL STATED, AMIR'S STATEMENT THAT HE HAS EXPANDED POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF RUBBER STAMP ADVISORY COUNCIL WAS PLAINLY INACCURATE SINCE, ALTHOUGH THIS REFORM IN WORKS, NOTHING LIKELY TO HAPPEN FOR ANOTHER SIX MONTHS. KAMEL SAID AMIR HAD ALSO PROVIDED WRONG ANSWER TO JARALLAH'S QUESTION ON QATAR'S DISPUTE WITH BAHRAIN OVER HWAR ISLAND. AMIR HAD SAID THAT QATARI CLAIM BASED ON MEDIAN LINE, WHEREAS

IT ACTUALLY BASED ON TERRITORIAL WATERS. KAMEL SAID FORTUNATELY SOMEONE IN PALACE HAD SPOTTED AMIR'S MISTAKE AND JARALLAH HAD AGREED TO DELETE QUESTION AND ANSWER FROM INTERVIEW, GIVEN HIGH SENSITIVITY OF HWAR PROBLEM.

6. KAMEL EMPHASIZED WITH REGRET HIS VIEW THAT INTERVIEW COULD NOT HELP BUT HAVE NEGATIVE IMPACT ON AMIR'S IMAGE BOTH AT HOME AND ABROAD. HE SAID HE WAS SURE THAT AMIR'S VIEWS AS PUBLISHED WERE AN ACCURATE REFLECTION OF HIS ATTITUDE ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS, AND THIS COMPOUNDED SERIOUSNESS OF NEGATIVE IMPACT. ACCORDING KAMEL, THIS PUBLIC REVELATION WILL SERVE TO CONFIRM GROWING LOCAL CRITICISM OF AMIR'S POLICIES AND OUTLOOK. KAMEL SAID THAT AMIR UNDERSTANDS THAT INTERVIEW COULD BE DAMAGING TO HIM, AND IS ANGRY BECAUSE OF THIS. KAMEL WONDERED, HOWEVER, WHETHER AMIR REALIZES THAT IT IS HIS VIEWS THAT ARE BASIS OF TROUBLE AND NOT ONLY THE PUBLIC AIRING OF THEM.

7. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH GOQ'S UPSET OVER INTERVIEW IS PERHAPS EXAGGERATED, IT AGAIN POINTS UP THAT THERE IS SOME HIGH-LEVEL CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 DOHA 00708 170644Z

APPRECIATION THAT THE AMIR AND HIS REGIME MUST BE INCREASINGLY SENSITIVE TO POSSIBILITY OF LOCAL AND FOREIGN CRITICISM OF OUTDATED POLICIES WHICH ARE INCREASINGLY INCONGRUOUS WITH QATAR'S RAPID DEVELOPMENT. IT IS UNCERTAIN, MSWEVER, WHETHER THIS SENSITIVITY HAS REACHED AMIR HIMSELF, AND HIS PERCEPTION OF SITUATION REMAINS KEY TO ANY RECOGNITION THAT THERE IS NECESSITY TO TAKE SUCH CRITICISM INTO ACCOUNT IN GOVERNING COUNTRY.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CHIEF OF STATE, PRESS CONFERENCES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 JUN 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: RowellE0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975DOHA00708
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750210-0425
From: DOHA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750636/aaaabger.tel
Line Count: 162
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: 75 DOHA 0688, 75 DOHA 0694
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: RowellE0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <27 JUN 2003 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <04 NOV 2003 by RowellE0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AMIR OF QATAR'S INTERVIEW WITH KUWAITI PAPER DISTURBS GOQ
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, QA, KU, (THANI, KHALIFA IBN HAMAD AL)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006